BOARD PAPER

FIRE STANDARDS BOARD

Item Number	Item 8 - Paper 4
Title of Paper	Fire Standards Board Approvals
Decision or Information	Decision
Date of Meeting	5 March 2026
Presented by	Fire Standards Team
Attachments	Appendix A – Safeguarding Fire Standard Report Appendix B – Code of Ethics Post-Consultation Report

Summary

The Fire Standards Board is in the process of reviewing Fire Standards that have been published for three or more years and have reached their agreed review date. The following Fire Standards and their accompanying reports are presented for the Board's consideration:

- Safeguarding: No changes required
- Code of Ethics: Subject to agreement from the NFCC PCL Committee, approve the proposed amendments to the Code of Ethics Fire Standard for publication and the included communications plan.

The Board is asked to review the Safeguarding Fire Standard report in Appendix A and the Code of Ethics Post-Consultation Report in Appendix B and confirm if they are agreement with the respective recommendations.

APPENDIX A

FIRE STANDARDS BOARD

Purpose

This report contains information on the process in which the Safeguarding Fire Standard was reviewed, the findings and subsequent proposed amendments.

The report has been produced for the Fire Standards Board (FSB) to provide assurance and confidence in the approach taken.

Review Process

The review followed the agreed FSB Maintenance Review Process.

The Fire Standard was reviewed by a team consisting of NFCC Safeguarding Lead and Safeguarding Board Chair, Donna Bentley and Safeguarding Board Vice-Chair, Kevin Johnson.

Findings

The team reviewed each section of the Fire Standard, considering the following:

- The currency of the content – e.g. did the standard cover the topic appropriately? As it was one of the first standards to be produced, were there lessons learnt from more recently developed standards that could be brought into this one?
- Was there any new guidance, legislation or qualifications that impacted the content within the standard?
- Were the benefits appropriate and measurable?

The team agreed that since the initial publication in 2022 and its subsequent amendment in December 2023 to include background checks relating to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (Exceptions) Order, the Safeguarding Fire Standard remained current and relevant.

The team reviewed each section of the standard and agreed that no new legislation or guidance had been produced and therefore no amendments were required.

Conclusion

Following the review with the Safeguarding team, the outcome of the review was shared the NFCC Safeguarding Practitioner Group, made up of practitioners from across all UK Fire and Rescue Services. The group agreed that the Safeguarding Fire Standard had been effectively reviewed and that no amendments were required.

The Board is asked to approve the review of the Safeguarding Fire Standard with no amendments.

Safeguarding Fire Standard

Desired Outcome

A fire and rescue service that actively promotes the Safeguarding of those in its Community and its employees and volunteers. It works proactively to reduce the risk of abuse, harm and neglect.

One that is compliant with Safeguarding legislation, understanding and effectively fulfilling its obligations and responsibilities to its Local Safeguarding Adults Boards and Local Safeguarding Children's Board or Partnership. It ensures its employees undergo regular thorough background checks.

A service whose culture has Safeguarding principles and processes fully embedded, enabling it to identify risk of abuse, harm, or neglect to individuals and intervene to mitigate the risk at the earliest opportunity.

One whose staff are trained to understand and be able to apply Safeguarding policies and processes. They are suitably supported and empowered to be able to respond adequately to Safeguarding incidents as appropriate to their roles and responsibilities.

A service that collaborates appropriately with Others to ensure a coordinated approach to Safeguarding.

What is required to meet the Fire Standard

A fire and rescue service **must**:

1. have a responsible person within the service at the highest strategic level (where reasonable), that demonstrates the services commitment to the importance of Safeguarding and is responsible for ensuring:
    a. the service is and remains compliant with legislation and follows relevant guidance;
    b. the service's Designated Safeguarding Leads or Head of Safeguarding, where applicable, are appropriately qualified and suitably trained in accordance with legislation and the requirement of Local Safeguarding Adults and Children's Boards;
2. only use accredited persons to provide Safeguarding training.
3. educate, train and support employees and volunteers, relevant to their role, in the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, young people and adults at risk of abuse, harm, or neglect.
4. align local training to its Community Risk Management Plan and the NFCC's Safeguarding Guidance for Children, Young People and Adults.
5. implement proportionate processes to enable regular background checks appropriate to individual roles or duties and having due regard to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (Exceptions) Order.

6. work effectively with Others (including cross-border working) to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, young people and adults at risk of abuse, harm, or neglect.
7. have agreed systems, standards and protocols in place to:
    a. allow Safeguarding concerns to be raised or otherwise identified;
    b. investigate Safeguarding concerns; and
    c. maintain effective and efficient information sharing, ensuring data is made available to all those who need it, in accordance with national and local guidelines.
8. demonstrate inclusivity by recognising and responding to the diversity of its Community and providing Equality of Access

A fire and rescue service **should**:

9. Use the suite of NFCC Safeguarding guidance including self-assessment and risk assessments, and other guidance relevant to mitigating the risk of abuse, harm, or neglect.
10. contribute to the continual improvement of Safeguarding adults and children at risk of harm by communicating, sharing learning and experiences with the NFCC network of fire and rescue service Safeguarding leads through, but not limited to:
    a. engaging with NFCC forums;
    b. supporting the NFCC Safeguarding Workstream through national and regional structures; and
    c. considering appropriate representation at relevant national events and conferences.

Expected benefits of achieving the Fire Standard

1. Improved Safeguarding outcomes for communities, employees and volunteers and a raised awareness of Safeguarding evidenced by:
    1. measurable Safeguarding referrals that encompass both early identification and threshold assessments before referral to Local Authorities
    2. an increase in the number of employees and volunteers trained in Safeguarding .
2. Fire and rescue services become trusted and reliable partners on Safeguarding to Local Authorities, statutory agencies, and universal services.
3. Increased numbers of at-risk Community members, employees and volunteers living and working safely because Safeguarding risks are identified and responded to sooner.
4. Standardised approach to Safeguarding will help to maximise the efficiency of cross border, collaborative, and shared learning opportunities.

Legal requirements or mandatory duties

This Fire Standard reflects only the most appropriate legislation to this topic. We recognise that fire and rescue services must comply with a broader list of legislation to undertake their duties, which would be applicable to all standards. View the legislation which applies to all Fire Standards.

- The Care Act
- Children's Act
- Working Together to Safeguard Children
- Counter Terrorism and Security Act

- Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill
- Policing & Crime Act
- Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (Exceptions) Order
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act
- Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (legislation.gov.uk)
- Equality Act

Linked qualifications, accreditations or Fire Standards

- Prevention Fire Standard
- Code of Ethics Fire Standard
- Protection Fire Standard
- Community Risk Management Planning
- Operational Competence Fire Standard
- Operational Learning Fire Standard
- Operational Preparedness Fire Standard
- NFCC CPD accredited Safeguarding 'train the trainer' course Level 3 and 4
- Level 1 Safeguarding training (e-learning or equivalent)
- Leading and Developing People Fire Standard
- Leading the Service Fire Standard

Guidance and supporting information

- NFCC Safeguarding Guidance for Children, Young People and Adults (including the Self-Assessment Toolkit)
- NFCC Person Centred Framework
- NFCC Managing Allegations Guidance
- NFCC Positive Disclosure Risk Assessment Guidance
- Joint DBS Eligibility Checks for Fire and Rescue Authority Roles
- NFCC Safeguarding Competency Training Framework
- NFCC Equality of Access

Communications Plan

Objective and message: Make identified FRS workforce members aware of approved changes to Safeguarding Fire Standard
Timing: Following the Board's approval, communications on the outcome of the review will be issued.
Audience: Due to no changes to the standard, communications should be limited to all those in fire and rescue services responsible for Safeguarding and for Fire Standard. These have been identified as the following groups:

Audience	**Method/Platform**
Safeguarding practitioners	NFCC Safeguarding Practitioners Network NFCC Connect
Fire and Rescue Service Single Points of Contact	Email NFCC Connect

APPENDIX B

FIRE STANDARDS BOARD

Code of Ethics Fire Standard Post Consultation Summary

The Board is asked to:

- note the contents of this report;
- Subject to agreement from the NFCC PCL Committee, approve the proposed amendments to the Code of Ethics Fire Standard for publication and the included communications plan.

This report contains details from the consultation and subsequent analysis on the Code of Ethics Fire Standard which took place between December 2025 and January 2026.

The report provides an overview of the process undertaken and amendments that have been made to the Fire Standard based on the consultation feedback. The report has been produced for the Fire Standards Board (Board or FSB) to provide assurance and confidence in the approach taken.

Promoting the Consultation

The consultation survey was hosted on the Fire Standards Board's website.

The stakeholders for consultation were identified and they were notified about the consultation through several communication channels:

- Various NFCC Connect groups
- Via direct email message

All identified stakeholders, including HR Practitioner groups were engaged throughout the process and were contacted by email to notify them of the consultation.

Response to the Fire Standard Consultation

A total of 26 responses were received, including 19 from services within England. Some services provided multiple responses (with individual responses received, as well responses on behalf of the organisation) Responding services include:

Avon	Hampshire and Isle of Wight	Nottinghamshire
Cheshire	Hereford and Worcester	South Yorkshire
Cleveland	Kent	Staffordshire
County Durham and Darlington	Merseyside	Tyne and Wear
Devon & Somerset	Norfolk	West Sussex
East Sussex	Northamptonshire	West Yorkshire
Essex		

Responses were received from the below devolved administrations:

- South Wales

Responses were also received from the organisations below:

- Fire and Rescue Services Association

Consultation Responses

47 comments were analysed, several which contained multiple points and opinions. Each of these have been reviewed and categorised into the following categories:

a. Agreed
b. Partially agreed
c. Noted
d. Declined

The consultation feedback provided covered a range of topics including:

- clarity around the expectation of leaders;
- The role between a services own values and behaviours and the Core Code of Ethics
- Clarity of language.

Amendments suggested by respondents that were **declined** included topics such as:

- Changing terminology which is already consistent with the other Fire Standards or already produced guidance
- The suggestion that Fire Authorities (or equivalent) should adopt the Core Code and demonstrate the service is fully committed to it
- Too much detail requested around certain topics which is not consistent with the high-level information that should be presented in a Fire Standard, much of this is included in the underpinning guidance

Modifications to the Fire Standard

Following analysis of the consultation feedback, further amendments were made to the draft Fire Standard following its initial review.

The amendments made are as follows (new additions in red):

Desired Outcome

1. "*The principles of the Core Code are reflected in decision-making at all levels and are at the heart of day to day working practice.*" was amended to strengthen the meaning that principles are visible in behaviour, culture and day to day running of the organisation.

2. "*All Leaders are accountable for the culture of the team, function or service that they have responsibility for, and strive to continuously learn about, monitor and improve this.*" Respondents wanted clarity on what was meant by leaders. The wording was amended to make clear that this was not just about those in senior leadership roles, but all those in positions where they are responsible for people or services.
3. "*All those who work within or on behalf of a service are accountable for their own behaviour and contribute to a positive working culture*." Comments noted that in the initial re-draft, the group had removed a point about the contribution of good behaviour to a positive working culture. The group felt this was important and placed it back in.

To Achieve This Fire Standard

1. "*Demonstrate how the Core Code is embedded into its decision-making, policies, procedures, processes, and aligned with its own local values, if applicable;*" Several comments noted that services have their own local values and the previous iteration of the standard failed to note how these would work together with the Core Code. The working group noted that some services had removed their own local values and adopted the Core Code fully, whilst other services used both whilst ensuring the Core Code was still fully adopted.
2. "*Provide training and support to all those who work for, or on behalf of, a service to ensure they fully understand:*
    a. *their responsibilities in upholding the Core Code; and*
    b. *what this looks like in practice;*"

    Feedback suggested that services should also provide support to all employees to ensure they know their role in upholding the Core Code, including providing examples of what the practical application of this would look like.

3. The word "*bed*" in point 4, was reworded to "*embed*"
4. The word "*drive*" was added to point 5 to clarify language when talking about continuous improvement.

Expected Benefits of Achieving the Fire Standard

All benefits were reworded so that they were clear and measurable:

1. Strengthens ethical and professional behaviour across the service and ensures transparent and consistent ways of working.
2. Fosters an inclusive and respectful working culture
3. Builds greater trust in the service and enhances its reputation
4. Creates a psychologically safe workplace, where inappropriate behaviour is challenged and all are held to account for their actions.

5. Improves governance and strengthens leadership at all levels

Benefit 5: "*Improves the recruitment and retention of a workforce that is representative of the community it serves*" was removed as it was felt that although this was an aspiration, the standard would not directly contribute to this.

Legal Requirements and Mandatory Duties

The following legislation was removed or moved to another section:

1. Workers Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act
2. Employment Rights Act (Due to be enacted in 2026)

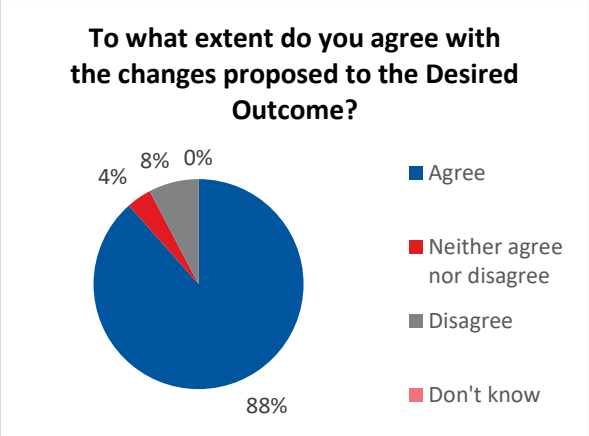
Guidance and Supporting Information

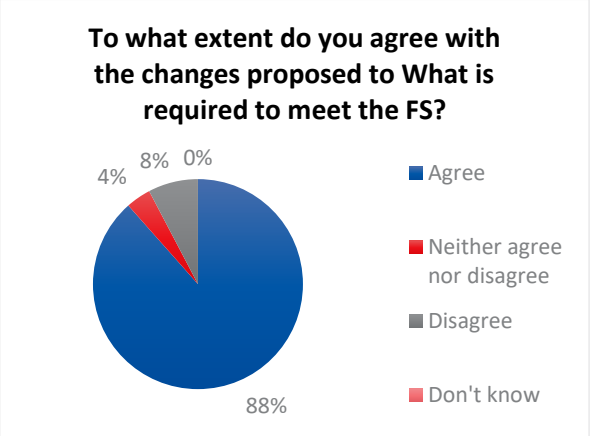
The following guidance was added:

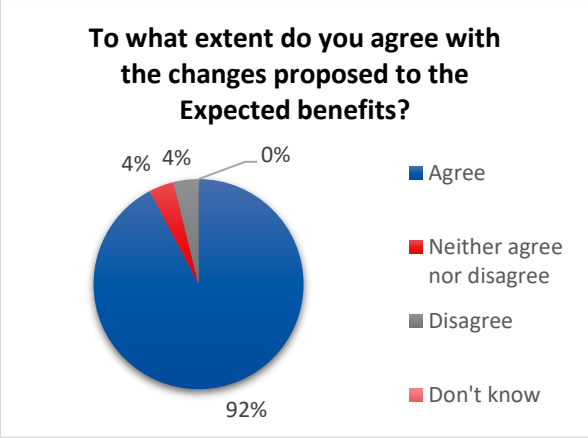
1. NFCC Leadership Framework
2. NFCC Challenging Inappropriate Behaviour Toolkit
3. NFCC Culture Dashboard Methodology
4. NFCC People, Culture, and Leadership Strategic Plan
5. NFCC Coaching and Mentoring Toolkit
6. NFCC Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Hub
7. NFCC Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Guidance: Statement of Commitment

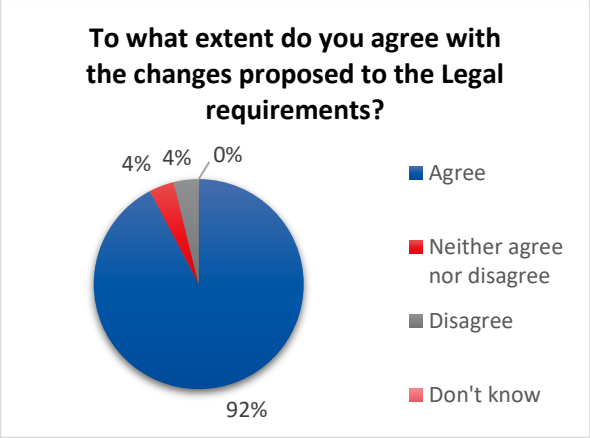
Consultation Questions – Summary of Responses

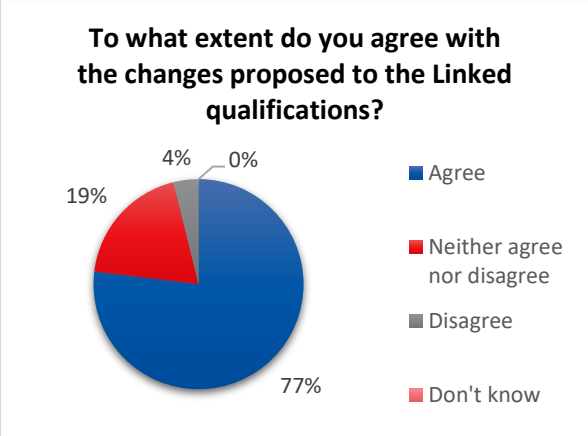
Responses to questions on the content of the Fire Standard are summarised below.

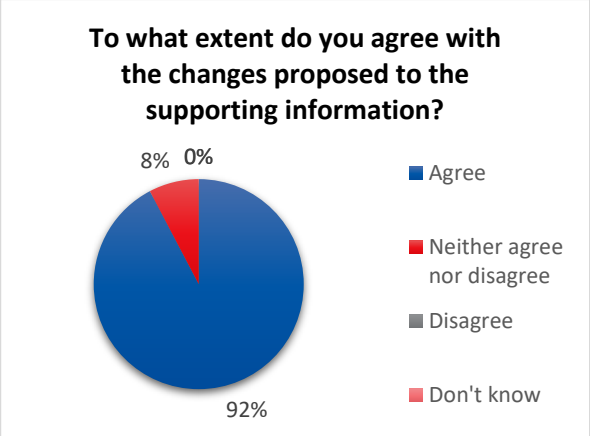












Communications Plan

Objective and message: Make identified FRS workforce members aware of approved changes to Code of Ethics Fire Standard
Timing: Following the Board's approval, the approved Fire Standard will be published and communications issued.
Audience: Due to several changes to the standard, communications should be directed to:

- those impacted directly;
- Senior colleagues within services;
- Those interested in Fire Standards (FSB Mailing list); and
- Those who responded to the consultation but who do not work in a service (this includes representative bodies)

These have been identified as the following groups:

Audience	**Method/Platform**
HR Practitioners	NFCC People Culture and Leadership Hub Network Groups and Committee NFCC Connect

HR workforce	NFCC Connect
Fire Standards Single Point of Contact (these tend to be area managers/strategic leads and above)	Email Communication with NFCC Implementation Team who will disperse information
Fire Standards Board Website Users	News article on FSB Website and email to FSB Mailing List

Conclusion

The subsequent amendments to the Code of Ethics Fire Standard are currently with NFCC PCL Committee Chair, Rob MacDougall and is expected to be shared with the wider PCL Committee for agreement to publish the proposed amendments.

Subject to agreement from the NFCC PCL Committee, the Board is asked to approve the proposed amendments to the Code of Ethics Fire Standard for publication and the included communications plan.

APPENDIX B

Changes in red were agreed pre-consultation
Changes in blue were agreed post-consultation

Title of Standard	**Code of Ethics**
Review Date	May 2025
PRE-CONSULTATION FIRE STANDARD	**PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO CODE OF ETHICS FIRE STANDARD**
Desired Outcome	
A fire and rescue service where its members respect and follow the five principles of the Core Code of Ethics (Core Code). This is demonstrated in their service delivery to the public and builds community trust and confidence. The principles of the Core Code are represented within policies and processes and are at the heart of day-to-day activity. Leaders are accountable for the culture within their service and strive to continuously learn about, monitor and improve this. They display and promote good behaviours and challenge conduct that is inconsistent with the Core Code. This is evidenced by the attitude and conduct of those who lead and all who work for, or on behalf of, the service. All those who lead and work on behalf of a service display and promote good behaviours.	A fire and rescue service where its members respect and follow the five principles of the Core Code of Ethics (Core Code). This is demonstrated in their service delivery to the public and builds community trust and confidence. The principles of the Core Code are reflected in decision-making at all levels and are at the heart of day-to-day working practice. All Leaders are accountable for the culture of the team, function or service that they have responsibility for, and strive to continuously learn about, monitor and improve this. They display and promote good behaviours and challenge conduct that is inconsistent with the Core Code. This is evidenced by the attitude and conduct of those who lead and all who work for, or on behalf of, the service.

	All those who work within or on behalf of a service are accountable for their own behaviour and contribute to a positive working culture.
What is required to meet the Fire Standard	
A fire and rescue service must: 1. Proactively adopt the Core Code and be able to demonstrate that the service is fully committed to fulfilling it; 2. Demonstrate how the Core Code is embedded into its decision-making, policies, procedures, processes, and associated guidance; 3. Provide training and support to all those who work for, or on behalf of, a service to ensure they fully understand their responsibilities in upholding the Core Code; 4. ensure strategies, policies and performance measures are in place to promote and bed a positive and inclusive culture; and 5. Monitor and measure performance in relation to culture and the Core Code so that outcomes can be evaluated and learned from to continuously improve Everyone who works for, or on behalf of, the service must: 6. Understand and respect the Core Code and their responsibility to role model this through their behaviour; and	A fire and rescue service must: 1) Proactively adopt the Core Code and be able to demonstrate that the service is fully committed to fulfilling it; 2) Demonstrate how the Core Code is embedded into its decision-making, policies, procedures, processes, and aligned with its own local values, if applicable; 3) Provide training and support to all those who work for, or on behalf of, a service to ensure they fully understand: a) their responsibilities in upholding the Core Code; and b) what this looks like in practice; 4) Ensure strategies, policies and performance measures are in place to promote and embed a positive and inclusive culture; 5) Monitor and measure performance in relation to culture and the Core Code to drive continuous improvement. Everyone who works for, or on behalf of, the service must: 6) Understand and respect the Core Code and their responsibility to demonstrate this through their behaviour;

7. Actively promote the principles of the Core Code and use mechanisms to safely challenge or raise concerns about behaviours that do not meet them Those responsible for governing fire and rescue services must: 8. Hold the Chief Fire Officer to account by scrutinising strategies, policies and plans and ensuring these are consistent with the Core Code; and 9. Play a proactive role in challenging and providing support to service leaders and each other on any behaviour that is inconsistent with the Code. 10. conduct investigations and disciplinary procedures if these relate to a Principal Officer such as the Chief Fire Officer	7) Actively promote the principles of the Core Code and use mechanisms to safely challenge or raise concerns about behaviours that do not meet them. Those responsible for governing fire and rescue services must: 8) Be assured by the Chief Fire Officer that strategies and policies are consistent with the Core Code; 9) Play a proactive role in challenging and providing support to service leaders and each other, when behaviours fall short of the standards set out in the Code; and 10) ensure that investigations and disciplinary procedures involving a Principal Officer are carried out using the most appropriate means.
Expected benefits of achieving the Fire Standard	
1. Improved ethical and professional behaviour and transparent ways of working throughout the service 2. Generates a more inclusive and respectful working culture 3. Improves trust in and reputation of the service 4. Enables all those who work for, or on behalf of the service, to challenge inappropriate behaviour and hold others to account for their actions, leading to a psychologically safe workplace 5. Improves the recruitment and retention of a workforce that is representative of the community it serves 6. Improves governance and leadership of the service	1. Strengthens ethical and professional behaviour across the service and ensures transparent and consistent ways of working. 2. Fosters an inclusive and respectful working culture 3. Builds greater trust in the service and enhances its reputation 4. Creates a psychologically safe workplace, where inappropriate behaviour is addressed and all are held to account for their actions. 5. Improves governance and strengthens leadership at all levels
Legal requirements or mandatory duties	

• Equality Act
  – Public Sector Equality Duty
  – Workers Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act
• Local Audit and Accountability Act
• The Accounts and Audits Regulations
• Employment Rights Act (Due to be enacted in 2026)
	• Equality Act
	  – Public Sector Equality Duty
	  – Workers Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act
	• Local Audit and Accountability Act
	• The Accounts and Audits Regulations
	• Employment Rights Act (Due to be enacted in 2026)

Linked qualifications, accreditations or Fire Standards	
This Fire Standard and the Core Code underpin all Fire Standards. Currently there are no specific or linked qualifications and accreditations for this Fire Standard.	This Fire Standard and the Core Code underpin all Fire Standards. Currently there are no specific or linked qualifications and accreditations for this Fire Standard.
Guidance and supporting information	
• Core Code of Ethics for Fire and Rescue Services • CIPFA Principles of Good Governance • NFCC Leadership Framework • Challenging Inappropriate Behaviour toolkit • NFCC Culture Dashboard Methodology	• Core Code of Ethics for Fire and Rescue Services • CIPFA Principles of Good Governance • NFCC Leadership Framework • NFCC Challenging Inappropriate Behaviour Toolkit • NFCC Culture Dashboard Methodology • NFCC People, Culture, and Leadership Strategic Plan • NFCC Coaching and Mentoring Toolkit • NFCC Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Hub • NFCC Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Guidance: Statement of Commitment